

At the symphony

Iturbi on piano warms audience

The bitter cold of Saturday night last week at the symphony indeed caused recollection of the experience of Sam McGee. Once indoors, however, fuel for warmth was supplied by an energetic program of Russian and Norwegian works conducted by guest conductor and soloist, Jose Iturbi. It is remarkable, the unflagging energy put out by this modest but world-famous gentleman of seventy-two, from both performing and conducting Grieg's Piano Concerto to conducting, most ably, an overture and a symphony.

Presented chronologically, the Russian works—overture to Russlan and Ludmilla, and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony—were examples of productivity under the Tsars, in the former case; and under the Soviet regime, in the latter. Russlan and Ludmilla, by Glinka, an opera based on a fairy tale by Pushkin, is one of the

works which marks the founding of both a nationalistic and a romantic movement in Russia. The characteristic long-line melodies were well carried through with the exception of the re-occurrence of the cello melody in which a hurrying sense of rhythm momentarily caused instability.

Dmitri Shostakovich, whose entire musical education was received under the Soviet regime, figures not only on the musical, but the political scene as well. Unlike the serene environment under which Glinka wrote, Shostakovich began his writing just after the October Revolution, following the overthrow of the monarchy. Some of his early attempts, condemned by the government as containing too-violent emotion, caused the composer to re-assess his position and style of writing, the result of which was his Fifth Symphony which served, as Shostakovich wrote, as the "creative reply of a Soviet artist to just criticism."

Throughout the first, second and fourth movements, military-like sections are reiterated. The orchestration is intriguing: each group of instruments has its turn to speak. Whereas formerly opposition might be set up between winds and strings, here each group of strings and each group of winds, on its own, must stand or fall. In several cases, the oratory of the first violins could have improved with uniformity in shifting. The harsh pizzicati underlined by piano brought a unique pithy sound.

The Largo, though written in only three days, contains some of the composer's most expressive writing, and justice was duly played. The long melodies of wide range, a difficult acoustical challenge to meet, come as a dual relief: first to the listener's ear which deserves a period of restfulness after the bombardings of the preceding movements, and second-

ly to the brass—they are excluded—who deserve to catch a breath.

The uniform quality of playing of the entire orchestra, yes even the brass, shows what progress towards good musicianship has been achieved by the old-fashioned nevertheless fruitful procedure of hard work.

—Barbara Fraser



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A world of opportunity

(C-68)

films

Reflections in a Golden Eye (at the Capitol) mirrors some often weird and occasionally wonderful images through the somewhat color-blind eye of director John Huston's camera.

The heavily muted technicolor enforces the colorless image of the drab military life on an army base in the deep South of a few years back. Occasionally reds and golds will seep through, giving distorted emphasis to the dissonant story beneath this archromatic shroud.

Marlon Brando plays a narcissistic major who is married to a selfish and bitchy wife (Elizabeth Taylor) whose earthy sexuality does little to arouse him. She strips in front of him and contemptuously tosses her clothes in his face, while he summons a confused, startled and embarrassed look. His military training has not prepared him for this type of adversary.

The man with the golden eye is a shy soldier who is attracted to Taylor and sneaks away from the barracks at night to peer through the lace curtains to see Taylor waggle her nude form up the stair case, while her frustrated husband breaks into tears at the bottom. Gradually his bravery increases and he sneaks up to her room at night to watch her sleep. The major meanwhile carefully examines a photo of Apollo which he keeps hidden in his study.

To fill the husband gap, Taylor has leashed another military man (Brian Keith) who possesses a neurotic wife (Julie Harris) who has withdrawn into depression after the stillborn birth of her child three years earlier.

Keith refuses to believe there is anything seriously wrong with her. Taylor retorts with a line which characterizes the neurosis of the picture: "She cut off her nipples with garden shears—you call that normal? My Gawd, garden shears!" But it turns out that most of the characters are in this Freudian brew of sexual hang-ups.

Brando gives a remarkably expressive portrayal of the major registering fascinated indignation at this voyeur-soldier whom he finds riding naked in the woods, or the uninhibited admiration of himself in front of the mirror.

His latent homosexual tendencies blossom as his senses are teased by the view of this soldier's virginal body. One night he follows the soldier back to the barracks and recovers his discarded candy wrapper, which he hides alongside Apollo.

As a professor in front of a class of young militants, he is especially appealing: the almost unintelligible speech, the nervous pacing back and forth, the broken thought patterns, the constant pained look as if suffering from a severe headache, while preaching useless information to a bored class which finds more involvement with the professor's idiosyncrasies than with the text of the lecture.

He explains to his wife and Keith the virtues of the enlisted man's life in the stark but sanitary barracks, and the bond of friendship which develops when everyone eats together, plays together, showers together, and sleeps side by side.

But *Reflections* is not without weakness. It begins with the lead phrase from Carson McCuller's novel: "There is a fort in the South where a few years ago a murder was committed." This device appears to be an attempt at creating suspense, but the foreshadowing of the murder is forgotten in the struggles of the characters. It appears again at the end of the film, but if the murder was the whole point of the production then it is a very poor one. The murder appears as just another abnormal event rather than a major climax. It does not tie together the whole story and many ends are left dangling.

This does not necessarily leave the movie without substance. The complicated character relationships are clearly expressed and character development is well controlled. The acting is extremely good, and the characterizations are strong enough to be engaging throughout the movie.

—Gordon Auck